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LETTER DATED 4 DECEMBER 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you, for communication to the members of the Security Council of the United Nations, a document clarifying the aide-mémoire of the United Republic of Tanzania concerning the fact-finding mission that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has decided to send to Burundi and to the United Republic of Tanzania. A delegation from the Tanzanian Government circulated the said aide-mémoire at the United Nations and it was circulated by the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on 28 November 1997 at an informal meeting of the Permanent Representatives of certain countries in the region and the Chairman of the Group of African States for the month of November.

I should be grateful if you would have it circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gamaliel NDARUZANIYE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Clarification dated 2 December 1997 concerning the aide-mémoire of the United Republic of Tanzania concerning the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission

The Government of the Republic of Burundi has examined the aide-mémoire which the Tanzanian Government prepared in response to the decision by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to send a fact-finding mission to the shared border between the two countries.

While noting that the Tanzanian authorities have professed that they intend to work doggedly to restore peace in Burundi, the Government of Burundi cannot help but deplore that the situation within Burundi is continually presented by the United Republic of Tanzania through the distorting prism inspired solely by the members of the armed groups and rebels situated in its territory.

It is distressing, to say the least, that the Tanzanian Government sees the flow of refugees in its territory as the most serious consequence of the October 1993 crisis and that it chooses to say nothing about the genocide which has claimed more than 150,000 innocent victims and to deliberately ignore the fact that, had it not been for the change that President Pierre Buyoya made on 25 July 1996, that genocide would have continued until this day. Any dispassionate observer can state today that the security situation has definitely improved.

Regarding the peace negotiations which are being mediated by former President Julius Nyerere, the Government has always stressed that it is resolved to find a negotiated solution, but it has always indicated that the peace process cannot succeed unless a favourable climate is created to that end. Moreover, the postponement of the Arusha talks, which had been scheduled for 25 August 1997, was requested simply in order to allow time for an easing of tensions; the latter had been building because of repeated statements and ever-increasing demands orchestrated by the Tanzanian party in connection with the question of economic sanctions and security on the shared border.

In order to avoid entering into an argument with a neighbouring country over what has been described as an "imaginary problem", Burundi has requested a United Nations fact-finding mission which would look objectively into what is really happening on the border between the two countries. This request was made in response to the attacks on Burundian soil which occurred on 27 September and 27 October 1997, respectively, and which caused extensive damage to persons and property.

In light of the repeated attacks and incursions by law enforcement forces on Burundian territory, the Government, whose primary mission is to assure the peace and security of its population, cannot but denounce the setting up of refugee camps which have been transformed into training camps for armed groups less than 20 kilometres from the border, in violation of the relevant international conventions.

Unfortunately, we are obliged to report that tensions are far from easing, what with the expulsion by force of the last representative of Burundi to Dar-es-Salaam on 20 November and the de facto closing of the embassy; the latter is now in the hands of rebel groups thanks to the Tanzanian authorities.

The Government of Burundi wishes to draw attention to other untruths contained in the aide-mémoire, particularly that concerning the alleged arrest of the President of the National Assembly. The latter has never been arrested and enjoys complete freedom of movement within the country.

Likewise, the execution of the sentences handed down in the case of the genocide of 31 July 1997 followed all Burundian legal procedures, free from any partisan or ethnic considerations. It cannot be tied into the peace process which the Government has vigorously embarked upon since 25 July 1996 and is not contrary to any so-called accord; Burundi does not know who the parties might be, especially as it has often been excluded from summits that concern it.

The Government of Burundi calls upon the international community once again to use its influence to help Burundi improve its relations with its Tanzanian neighbour and thereby move closer towards a lasting peace in the subregion.

It sincerely thanks the Security Council and the Secretary-General for the favourable response given to its request for the dispatch of a United Nations fact-finding mission, which is a significant contribution to that end.